

about vaccines, and even those who seem to encourage those crazy theories often get vaccinated themselves and don't tell anybody. We have had so many of these hard-right leaders admitting: "Oh, yes, I did get vaccinated," even though they are telling people they shouldn't have to take one. "Oh, yes, I will get vaccinated, but you shouldn't have to."

If the only damage were to the person, him or herself, who didn't get vaccinated, maybe some people would say that is OK. But it is not just to them because, when there is a large pool of people unvaccinated, even if it is not the majority, that allows the COVID virus to spread, to mutate, to create new variants, and create new stronger variants. It is a pool of people. If you greatly reduce that pool, you greatly reduce the chance of a new variant, particularly a virulent one, from afflicting us in the months ahead. It is crazy.

The internet has had a role in spreading this, and so has the far right. The same people in the far right who want to tear down government and hurt working people in so many other ways are here doing the same thing—the same thing—even though, as I said, a good number of them get vaccinated themselves—hypocrisy.

There should be one message, and one message only, coming from this Chamber to the American people: Get vaccinated. Get boosted. Stay safe yourself. Keep your families, your communities, and our country safe.

The worst thing we can do is tie our own hands behind our backs and let these new variants spread and grow—new ones after Omicron and so many others. But that is what Republican-pushed "anti-vaccines" would do.

I will strongly vote against this amendment. I have strong feelings about what is good for this country and about fighting anti-science and theories that seem to, as I said, come from the same place that the flat Earth theory came from, that the theory that the Sun revolves around the Earth came from. Anti-science, nonsense, fictional belief come from there. We ought not give it a stamp of approval in this Chamber.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for Washington Democrats, 2021 will have one major theme: ramming through inflationary spending on a partisan basis that hurts American families and actually helps China. That is how this all-Democratic Government began the year, jamming through a wasteful excuse for a stimulus bill that drove up

prices and made supply chain problems even worse. Not a single Republican supported it, and Democrats now want to end the year with another massive spree that would make it even worse.

The whole country understands that Democrats own this mess. They have seized one-party control of the economy. So you better believe that they will have one-party accountability for the resulting nightmare.

The President and his allies are badly upside down in overall approval ratings, upside down on the generic ballot, upside down on the economy. And the more the men and women of this country learn about the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Democrats are planning next, the less they want it or anything close to it.

Democrats have wanted to transform the country alone. They want to print and borrow trillion after trillion on their own. They want to create even more inflation on their own. So, as the Republicans have made clear for months, they will have to own a debt ceiling increase as well. This week, the House and Senate have reached a bipartisan agreement to make that happen. As the Democratic leader said yesterday, the Democrats are "willing to carry the burden." And so they will.

We have reached an agreement on a one-time, one-shot statutory process that will enable Democrats to raise the debt limit at a fixed dollar amount, which they will specify. Much like the vote on an arms sales resolution that occurred yesterday and the Congressional Review Act vote that will occur today, this will be a standard expedited process, at a simple majority threshold, established by law. Democrats will get one shot at this. They won't be able to add any other amendments. And every single Senate Democrat will have to put their name to the gigantic dollar amount of debt they are prepared to pile on the American people.

VACCINES

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on another matter, for the past 2 years, as the country has battled COVID-19, I have been a strong and consistent advocate of following the science and taking precautions. That has included strong support for the safe and effective vaccines that have helped millions of Americans substantially lower their risk of death or serious illness. I took advantage of these modern medical miracles as soon as I could. I have received a booster. I have encouraged Kentuckians and all Americans to take full advantage as well. I have recorded public service announcements.

I am a survivor of childhood polio. I have watched vaccines obliterate polio in our entire country in my lifetime. Trust me, there is no bigger proponent of vaccination than I am. But here is the thing: The United States of America is a free country. The Federal Government, elites in Washington, cannot micromanage citizens' personal choices

without a legitimate basis in law and the Constitution. And that goes double for Presidents going far beyond the bounds of their office and their authority.

President Biden's absurd private-sector vaccine mandate is blatant overreach. It is illegal. The administration has already lost in Federal court and had it blocked.

Washington Democrats have lashed themselves to a mast that is very simple: Unvaccinated people should be fired. That is what they want. They don't trust individuals, families, doctors, employers, and customers to sort things out for themselves. They want every worker at a medium-sized business and up to either get the shot or get fired by President Biden. And buried in the illegal mandate is a call to explore whether it should expand to all businesses.

This is not how things work in our country, period. Workers are not happy. Medium-sized businesses are not happy, especially not in the middle of this worker shortage. And, frankly, nobody who understands our system of government is happy.

I have heard from so many Kentuckians who are affected by the administration's suite of several unwise vaccine mandates. Here is one quote:

My wife . . . was notified that if she doesn't get fully vaccinated by January 4 then she would be terminated and lose her job without severance or unemployment. . . . She has been [there] for 17 years and has nothing but exemplary reviews.

Here is another:

I will lose my job at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant. I very much enjoyed my work there and had every intention of retiring from the plant. However, due to Joe Biden's forced vaccine mandate, I will be terminated. . . . Please let a man who wants to work, go to work.

Here is another:

My firm [of] 103 employees will [either] lose about 25 to the mandate, or lay off 4 to get to 99. Which one should we do?

Remember, personally, I would encourage each of these Kentuckians to get the vaccine, but for the purposes of this conversation, that really isn't the point. You better believe I am going to stand up and fight for their freedom.

I want to thank the junior Senator from Indiana for spearheading this resolution to overturn the Biden administration's illegal mandate. I am a proud cosponsor. I will proudly vote for it and urge every Senator to do the same.

NOMINATION OF RACHAEL S. ROLLINS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on one final matter, the national murder rate just recorded its biggest jump in more than a century. In some cities, homicides have set alltime records. From Albuquerque to Milwaukee, Memphis to Des Moines, city officials reported more murders last year than in any prior year. In my hometown of Louisville, homicides this year have now broken last year's alltime record.